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Rift on ILO Spurs Labor To Review Foreign Policy

By GEORGE MORRIS

THE RIFT in the AFL-CIO's executive council over relations with the UN's International Labor Organization, has widened to the whole field of labor's foreign affairs policy, opening up a Pandora's Box within the AFL-CIO that George Meany has managed to keep tightly closed for many years. The 18 votes in last week's council meeting in Washington in favor of Meany's instruction for a boycott of ILO because a Polish representative was elected its chairman, to six votes for Walter Reuther's position was only the curtain raiser, as reported in detail in The Worker of June 21.

A letter by Meany in reply to Reuther's charges that the ILO action was "unwise, undemocratic and unfortunate" was especially sharp because Reuther brought the dispute into the open. Meany wrote:

"I do not question the right of the UAW, or any other affiliate, to criticize any action of mine, as president of the AFL-CIO. The challenge to the administrative conduct of any organization, by an affiliate of that organization, must be an internal matter, and should be pursued through the internal channels for the resolution of such charges and issues, at least before being made the subject matter of a publicity campaign."

FUTILE YEARS

The forces backing Reuther say they have limited their criticism of policies affecting international affairs to internal channels for years without getting even an elementary consultation on issues that come up. They charge that the AFL-CIO's foreign affairs are a "vest pocket operation of Jay Lovestone, Meany's 'secretary of state' known as the 'CIA man in labor.'"

Reuther said in his statement that the "labor movement belongs to all its members and is not the private property of any one." And he served warning that from now on his 1,600,000-member UAW will insist on a say "on all policy matters, both foreign and domestic."

No one has talked like that to Meany before. The biggest defeat for the Meany-Lovestone forces is the apparent success in bringing the issues of peace and war into the open in America's labor movement.

ICFTU REVOLT

Meany's letter expressed fear as to the effect that the debate may have on his and Lovestone's efforts to turn the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions into a conduit of the CIA in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Currently the ICFTU is in revolt against Meany domination, since almost all its affiliates now accept the principle of coexistence, and not one of them is known to back U.S. policy in Vietnam.

"In addition, I regret the publicity which will undoubtedly follow in the European press," wrote Meany, "at a time when you and I both know the ICFTU hangs in the balance; at a time when you and I both agree that the ICFTU needs the fullest possible support from American labor; at a time when the executive board meeting of the ICFTU is just a few weeks away — it is indeed unfortunate that our European trade union friends should be led to believe that there is a major split in American labor."

The "crisis" in the ICFTU in Meany's sense was his inability to get it to make "anti-Communism" its "major" goal.

As to the "support" the ICFTU allegedly needs, Meany means the united AFL-CIO pressure to get it back fully on the "anti-Communist road."

Meany and Reuther, however, have also differed much on policy in the ICFTU.

WIDE ATTENTION

The executive council meeting of the AFL-CIO that sparked the foreign policy debate has received wide press attention and editorial comment throughout the country. The magazines are also beginning to give attention to the charge by Victor Reuther, UAW head of international affairs, that Lovestone, the AFL-CIO's director of international affairs, is "involved" in the CIA.

The New Republic runs an article titled, "Lovestone's Cold War — the AFL-CIO has its own CIA," by Dan Kurzman, who last December wrote four articles in the Washington Post on Lovestone's CIA relationships and activities (summarized in The Worker in January).

Repeating the same material, Kurzman noted that after these articles appeared, "Lovestone persuaded Labor Department officials and Leonard Marks, director of the United States Information Agency, to cancel plans for distributing the articles to U.S. missions abroad."

"Building walls instead of bridges seems to be the AFL-CIO's idea of how to arrive at one world," said the N.Y. Times last Monday in an editorial captioned "U.S. Labor's Iron Curtain." Rapping both the Meany boycott of the ILO and his intrusion with the State Department to block visas for a Soviet trade union delegation invited by the auto union that was due here June 6, the Times said: "The backlash reflected itself almost at once in the election of a Soviet unionist as a workers' representative in the ILO governing body, a much more serious rebuff of the AFL-CIO than the Pole's designation to the ceremonial post of conference president."

In an editorial before the council meeting, the Times rapped sharply the Meany-Lovestone foreign policy and said the ILO issue "presages more open debate inside the AFL-CIO on the wisdom of the adamant stand its president, George Meany, has taken against any East-West cooperation." The paper also welcomed "the

new respectability. Reuther was given to "the right of dissent in an organization that speaks in the name of 13.5 million American workers."

The Washington Post also aligned itself in support of Reuther editorially and says, "Far too long the foreign policy of AFL-CIO President George Meany has gone substantially unchallenged within the American labor movement."

LOVESTONE EVASIVE

For the first time since he was charged with involvement with the CIA — for more than a generation in the Daily Worker and Worker, and since 1955 from sources outside the left — Lovestone "replied." But he was characteristically evasive. Questioned by the Times (Sunday, June 19) on Victor Reuther's charge that he is "involved" with the CIA, Lovestone, according to the Times, said the "allegation that the AFL-CIO has ties with the Central Intelligence Agency is absolute nonsense and fraud." But the charge was that he, Lovestone, is involved in the CIA, not the AFL-CIO. There is no way of getting the CIA's statement on the matter because the cloak and dagger agency never issues statements related to its operatives, who are apparently given strict instructions to make no comment on their individual positions. Moreover, as all authoritative writers on the CIA note, the agency uses numerous "cover organizations" at conduits, of which there are several in Lovestone's orbit.

In its interview of both Victor Reuther and Lovestone, the Times reported the former as saying that the UAW favors pursuing "any and every opening" for negotiations of a peace in Vietnam and holds there can be no military victory. But Lovestone, said Reuther, was even "more for a forceful position in Vietnam" than the President.

Lovestone, confirming that estimate, told the Times that he holds the only road to peace to be "superior military strength and no appeasement."

Victor Reuther welcomed the flareup over the ILO because "many of our affiliates will now feel freer to engage in more discussion and debate on fundamental foreign policy questions."

All these exchanges of views form the sparring for the special executive council meeting some time next fall for a "four or five" day discussion of the AFL-CIO's foreign policy position.

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